

A STORY OF LOVE, DUTY, AND POLITICS SET AGAINST THE BACKDROP of the wild and untamed Scottish Highlands, Rossini's *La Donna del Lago* is a masterpiece of the bel canto style, while at the same time providing a window into the imagination of 19th-century audiences. It was the first Italian opera to be based on the works of the Scottish poet and novelist Sir Walter Scott, whose atmospheric, romantic depictions of Scotland's customs and landscape became the source for several of the 19th century's most enduring operas, most notably Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

This Met premiere production of *La Donna del Lago* features two of today's greatest opera stars—mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato as the “Lady of the Lake” of the title and tenor Juan Diego Flórez as the Scottish king whose romantic and political desires drive the dramatic narrative. Director Paul Curran's evocative staging brings a contemporary vision to the earthiness and allure of Scotland as imagined by Rossini and his contemporaries.

This guide is intended to provide students with tools to increase their appreciation of this bel canto masterpiece and its relation to important topics in 19th-century intellectual history. Through a careful consideration of *La Donna del Lago*'s source, its influences, and its relation to contemporary issues, students will discover the richness and drama of the story and its musical setting. The activities on the following pages are designed to provide context, deepen background knowledge, and enrich the overall experience of this *Live in HD* transmission. This guide also aligns with key strands of the Common Core Standards.

THE WORK:

LA DONNA DEL LAGO

An opera in two acts, sung in Italian

Music by Gioachino Rossini

Libretto by Andrea Leone Tottola

Based on the epic poem *The Lady of the Lake* by Sir Walter Scott

First performed October 24, 1819 at the Teatro San Carlo, Naples, Italy

PRODUCTION

Michele Mariotti, Conductor

Paul Curran, Production

Kevin Knight, Set and Costume Designer

Duane Schuler, Lighting Designer

Driscoll Otto, Projection Designer

STARRING

(In order of vocal appearance):

Joyce DiDonato

ELLEN (soprano)

Juan Diego Flórez

KING JAMES/UBERTO (tenor)

Daniela Barcellona

MALCOLM (contralto)

Oren Gradus

DOUGLAS (bass)

John Osborn

RODRIGO (tenor)

Justina Gringyte

ALBINA (soprano)

Robin Leggate

SERANO (tenor)

Production a gift of the Betsy and Edward Cohen/Areté Foundation Fund for New Productions & Revivals, and Dominique and Frédéric Laffont

Additional funding from Mr. and Mrs. William R. Miller

Co-production of the Metropolitan Opera and the Santa Fe Opera



DIDONATO



BARCELLONA



FLÓREZ



GRADUS

The guide includes four sections and three types of activities.

- **THE SOURCE, THE STORY, WHO'S WHO IN LA DONNA DEL LAGO, AND A COMPOSER TIMELINE**

- **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:**
Three activities designed to align with and support various Common Core Standard strands used in ELA, History/Social Studies, and Music curricula

- **PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES:**
Two activities to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission, highlighting specific aspects of this production

- **POST-SHOW DISCUSSION:**
A wrap-up activity, integrating the *Live in HD* experience into the students' understanding of the performing arts and the humanities

- **STUDENT RESOURCE PAGES:**
Classroom-ready worksheets supporting the activities in the guide

The activities in this guide will address several aspects of *La Donna del Lago*:

- The way the librettist and composer portray the main characters and their romantic entanglements
- The roots of the opera in the contemporary fascination for Scotland and its literature
- Rossini's musical idiom and the characteristics of bel canto style
- Creative choices made by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera for this production
- The opera as a unified work of art, involving the efforts of composer, librettist, and Met artists

This guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *La Donna del Lago*, whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds and seeks to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts in general—as a medium of both entertainment and creative expression.

THE SOURCE: THE LADY OF THE LAKE BY SIR WALTER SCOTT The Scottish poet and novelist Sir Walter Scott is surpassed only by Shakespeare in the number of musical compositions inspired by his works. These include some of the most famous operas of the bel canto era, such as Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Bellini's *I Puritani*. Scott's narrative poem *The Lady of the Lake*, first published in 1810, provided the source material for Rossini's librettist Andrea Leone Tottola when the composer was asked to fill in a gap in the 1819 Naples performance season.

Although the story as told in Tottola's libretto differs from Scott's original poem (which itself is only very loosely based on history), he retained the three principal plot strands: the competition between the three men who love Ellen (Elena in the opera), the revolt of the Highland clans against the Scottish crown, and the eventual peace between King James and Douglas.

ACT I *Loch Katrine, Stirlingshire, Scotland.* Ellen, the Lady of the Lake, makes her daily crossing while shepherds watch their flocks and men hunt in the woods. She sings of her love for Malcolm Groeme, but comes across King James, who has disguised himself as "Uberto," hoping to meet the legendary beauty Ellen. Believing the King to be a hunter who has lost his way, she offers him hospitality and they depart for her home, while the King's men search for their disguised leader.

King James learns that Ellen's father is Douglas, his former tutor, who has since joined the Highland Clan that is opposed to James's rule. He also learns of Ellen's betrothal to Rodrigo, the chief of the Highland Clan and enemy of the King, but his jealousy is assuaged by Ellen's lukewarm reaction to the prospect of her marriage. Malcolm, the suitor whom Ellen loves, arrives shortly after James departs. Hidden, Malcolm must endure overhearing Douglas order his daughter to marry Rodrigo, as he commands. After Douglas has left, Malcolm and Ellen pledge their love.

The Highland warriors gather to welcome their leader, Rodrigo, who introduces Ellen as his future bride. Malcolm has now resolved to join the clan against the King, but his secret bond with Ellen is perceived by Douglas and Rodrigo when they meet. When news arrives of an attack by the King's army and the omen of a meteor passes in the sky, Rodrigo and his warriors depart for battle. Scotland is at war.

ACT II Still disguised as "Uberto," James searches desperately for Ellen, hoping to protect her from the coming bloodshed. When he finds her he once again declares his love, but she rejects his advances. He then gives her a ring which he claims was given to him by the King and will secure her protection from the King's forces. Rodrigo, who has overheard the conversation, attempts to have his soldiers kill the stranger, but Ellen intercedes. Rodrigo vows to duel with "Uberto" himself.



VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

SOPRANO

the highest-pitched type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian “mezzo” = middle, medium)

CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

COUNTERTENOR

a male singing voice whose vocal range is equivalent to that of a contralto, mezzo-soprano, or (less frequently) a soprano, usually through use of falsetto

TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

BARITONE

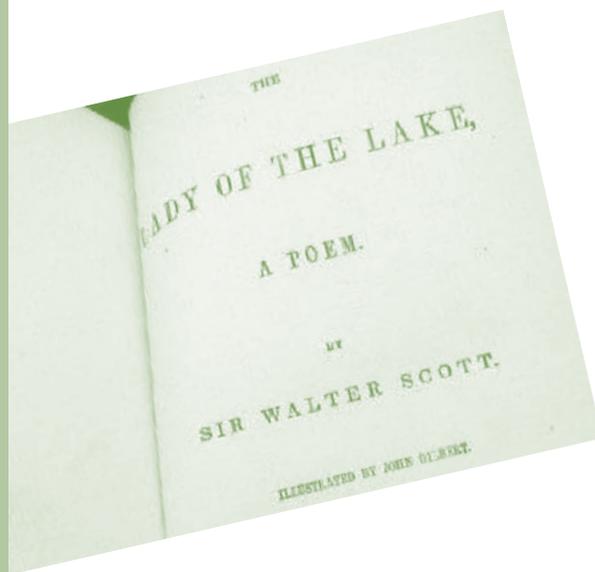
the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS

the lowest male voice

Meanwhile, Malcolm has left the battle in the hopes of finding Ellen, but is informed that she has followed her father to Stirling Palace to seek peace. Rodrigo is reported to have been killed and the Highlanders now face certain defeat. Malcolm declares that he will save Ellen or face his own death. Ellen enters the castle, determined to save the lives of her father, Malcolm, and Rodrigo. Using the ring she given to her by “Uberto” she gains access to the King’s chambers.

Ellen is surprised to see nobles surrounding “Uberto,” who soon reveals his true identity. His feelings for her soften his attitude towards her father, and he pardons both Douglas and Malcolm. Ellen and Malcolm are finally united, and all rejoice as a new peace reigns in Scotland.



WHO'S WHO IN LA DONNA DEL LAGO

CHARACTER		PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Ellen (Elena in Italian)	Daughter of Douglas, a girl from the Scottish Highlands	eh-LEH-nah	soprano	The "Lady of the Lake" of the opera's title. Beautiful and humble, she is caught between her duty to her clan and her love for Malcolm.
King James V (Giacomo) / Uberto	King of Scotland, in disguise as Uberto	JAH-co-mo / oo-BEAR-toh	tenor	Ruler of a land torn apart by civil discord; he is captivated by Ellen.
Malcolm (Malcom Groeme)	A young and honorable Highland warrior	mahl-COHM	contralto	Ellen's beloved; he has pledged to be faithful to her eternally. This is a trouser role (a male character played by a woman).
Rodrigo di Dhu	A Highlands clan chieftain	roh-DREE-go	tenor	A bellicose and jealous warrior, eager for battle. When he suspects that Ellen's heart belongs to another, he is enraged.
Douglas (Duglas d'Angus)	Previously a mentor to the king, now in revolt and banished from the court	doo-GLAHS	bass	Although an honorable man, he sees his daughter's marriage as a means to political advantage and ignores her desires.
Albina	Friend of Ellen	al-BEE-nah	soprano	Ellen's companion
Serano	An attendant to Douglas	seh-RAH-no	Tenor	Serano appears occasionally to deliver news and comment on the action.

Gioachino Rossini

- 1792** Rossini is born on February 29 in Pesaro, a small city on the Adriatic coast, to a family of musicians.
- 1804** The Rossini family moves to Bologna to obtain expert musical instruction for the young Gioachino.
- 1810** Rossini composes his first opera, *Demetrio e Polibio*. Later that year, he receives a commission from the Teatro San Moisè in Venice to write the music for a new farsa, *La Cambiale di Matrimonio*, which launches his career.
- 1810** *The Lady of the Lake*, the narrative poem by Sir Walter Scott that would form the basis for *La Donna del Lago*, is published.
- 1813** With the success of his operas *Tancredi* and *L'Italiana in Algeri*, Rossini gains international fame at the age of 20.
- 1815** Rossini begins a longstanding relationship with the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, which boasted an excellent orchestra and singers and was at that time the most highly funded opera house in Europe. Some of his most significant works date from this period, including the opera serie *Armida*, *Mosè in Egitto*, and *Semiramide*. Among Rossini's literary sources are Shakespeare, Racine, Voltaire, and the Italian Renaissance poet Torquato Tasso, as well as English Romantic poetry, early Italian Romantic drama, and even the new genre of the gothic novel.



1816 *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Rossini's most famous opera, premieres at Rome's Teatro Argentina.

1819 *La Donna del Lago* opens at the Teatro San Carlo on October 24.

1822 Rossini marries Isabella Colbran, the prima donna of the Teatro San Carlo. He created some of his most famous roles of the Naples years for Colbran, including Ellen in *La Donna del Lago*.

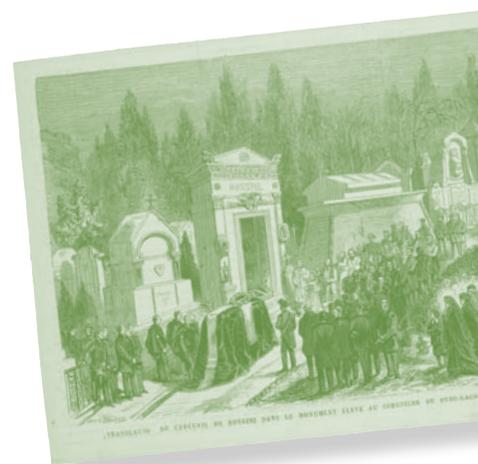
1824 Having secured a lucrative contract from the French government, Rossini and Colbran settle in Paris.

1829 Rossini completes *Guillaume Tell*, his final opera, which premieres at the Paris Opéra. Having created an astounding 39 stage works in 19 years, he retires from opera composition. Over the next 40 years, he only writes a few small-scale works, including a collection he called *Péchés de Vieillesse* ("Sins of Old Age").

1868 Having suffered from ill health for some time, Rossini dies on November 13 in Paris. His funeral is attended by thousands of mourners, and further services honoring his memory are held throughout Italy and France.



Isabella Colbran



Rossini in retirement, in a portrait by famed Parisian photographer Nadar taken in the 1850s.

English Language Arts

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available in the back of this guide entitled *The Language of Love*, as well as the audio selections from *La Donna del Lago* available online or on the accompanying CD. You will also need a small bell or buzzer for use in the final exercise.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

English/Language Arts, Poetry, Music, Theater, Italian

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- To become familiar with the characters and conflicts of *La Donna del Lago*
- To explore different modes of romantic expression through examples from literature as well as musical numbers from the opera
- To practice close reading and listening in order to analyze literary and musical techniques
- To identify Rossini's musical devices in portraying both love and its absence

The Language of Love

The central conflict of *La Donna del Lago* is romantic: three men compete for Ellen's love. Colliding personal and political forces put Ellen in an impossible situation: she is in love with a Highland warrior but engaged to another insurgent chieftain, who is in revolt against the very leader whose love she cannot accept. In this activity, students will explore textual elements that demonstrate these characters' desires, as well as more subtle musical suggestions that hint at Ellen's reception of these characters' proclamations of love. Students will:

- listen closely to musical numbers while following along with the text
- read complementary passages from literature and explore the notion of unrequited romantic expression in art
- gather evidence of inner thoughts of the characters in the opera
- participate in an improvisational exercise that brings Rossini's characters to life

STEPS

There's hardly a more common topic across all forms of art—visual, musical, or literary—than that of love. Whether reciprocated or unreturned, upheld or thwarted, sanctioned or illicit, love has fired the creative imagination of artists for centuries. In *La Donna del Lago*, Rossini presents four richly contrasting characters, each of which responds distinctively to this most compelling of emotions. In the case of Rodrigo, we find a character who loves sincerely but whose every word demonstrates his mismatch with Ellen. He presents a direct contrast to Malcolm, whose text and music are in much greater harmony with Ellen, who loves him in return. By closely studying the text and music of selected passages in Rossini's opera and comparing them to other artistic representations of characters who “say the wrong thing,” students will develop a sensitivity to the various ways that composers can play musical matchmaker.

STEP 1: For this activity, students will need a basic understanding of the characters in *La Donna del Lago* but no detailed knowledge of the entire plot. Begin the lesson by providing a quick summary of the opera's exposition: Ellen and her father Douglas, Malcolm, and Rodrigo are members of Highlands clans in revolt against King James of Scotland. Douglas has promised Ellen's hand in marriage to Rodrigo, but she is in love with Malcolm. In the meantime, the King happens upon Ellen and is immediately smitten.

STEP 2: Given that romantic love is one of the most universal subjects in art, it is natural that many artists have chosen to explore one of its subsets: the notion of misplaced or unrequited love. Invite students to offer examples from works of literature, the visual arts, poetry, or popular music whose essential concern is love gone awry: a character's declaration of affection ends embarrassingly. Ask them to elaborate on the ways that the people or narrators in their examples communicate their feelings:

do they address their love directly? Do they use poetic speech or flowery language? Do some of the examples draw on the same literary devices (metaphor, personification, etc.)? Do the narrators speak primarily of themselves and their desires or do they elaborate on the attributes of their beloved? Have your students try to draw some preliminary conclusions on which styles of communication might be more suited than others for expressing love.

STEP 3: Distribute the reproducible handout entitled *The Language of Love* and give students time to read the text of Ellen and Malcolm’s love duet, “*Vivere io no potrò*,” along with its preceding dialogue. Ask students to summarize what is happening. What can be deduced just from this brief scene?

- Ellen feels some kind of internal conflict.
- Malcolm’s arrival surprises her; they have evidently been separated for some time.
- Malcolm wonders whether he has cause to doubt Ellen’s love, and Ellen is offended.
- Malcolm claims that Ellen’s love would give him great strength.
- They pledge to be married no matter the consequences.
- They each vow that they would rather die than be separated.

Prompt students to respond with opinions on Malcolm and Ellen’s mode of communication. Is their dialogue sincere or hyperbolic? What are some other possible literary devices not employed here—satire, irony, metaphor? Ask them what might be considered conventional about Ellen and Malcolm’s statements: e.g. their vows, preferring death to separation, etc.

Next, play Ellen and Malcolm’s duet, starting with “*Vivere io no potrò*” (Track 1 on the CD at the back of this guide) and have students follow along with the text (explain that in the opera Malcolm is a trouser role—a male character played by a woman). After listening to the duet once, call attention to how the music correlates to the sense of the words:

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND LA DONNA DEL LAGO

This activity directly supports the following ELA-Literacy Common Core Strands:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3

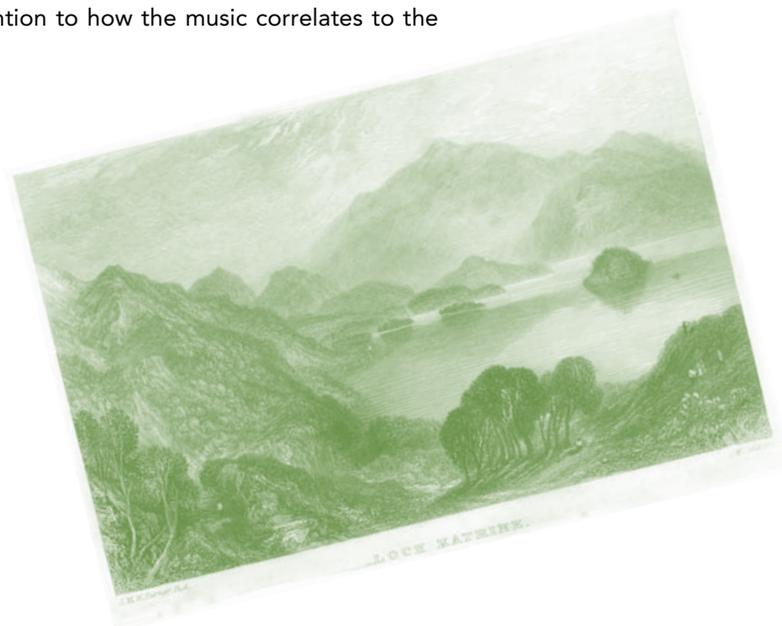
Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1.c

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3.d

Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.



Joyce DiDonato sings the role of Ellen.

KEN HOWARD / METROPOLITAN OPERA



- At the start of the duet, each of the characters sings alone. Against a stately accompaniment, Ellen declaims the stanza in full, followed by Malcolm.
- When Malcolm responds musically to Ellen, his melody is exactly the same as the music just sung by Ellen.
- After they have both sung through the stanza once on their own, they begin the text again from the top, now singing together in parallel. Notice when they deviate from this—for example at the successive repetitions of “*mio ben*” (“my darling”).
- The musical effect is one of complete unity. Ellen and Malcolm share exactly the same music; they are of one mind. Their romantic harmony is expressed literally in the music.

Following your discussion, replay the musical excerpt so that students may listen for Rossini’s musical portrayal of the love between Ellen and Malcolm.

STEP 4: Just as students will have experiences in their own lives of times when a romantic encounter does not go as they might like or when they find themselves saying the wrong thing, such situations can be found in abundance in art and literature. Consider the excerpts found on the reproducible handout:

- Mr. Collins’s proposal to Elizabeth Bennet in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*
- The first meeting of Betty and Bill in the one-act play *Sure Thing* by contemporary American author David Ives

After having students read the passages, ask them to identify a few attributes in one of the characters that the other finds undesirable. What is wrong with how Mr. Collins goes about wooing Elizabeth? What aspects of his personality are made clear by his manner of proposing and in his reasons for seeking a wife? In the David Ives excerpt, the ringing of the bell is a concrete indication of one character’s saying the wrong thing. In very quick fashion, have students extrapolate what Betty and Bill don’t like about one another in a few of the vignettes (e.g. Betty judges Bill for misidentifying the author of *The Sound and the Fury*; Bill prefers sports to literature; Betty thinks Bill didn’t go to a prestigious enough school; etc.).



Romanticism The period of cultural history known as Romanticism encompasses common attitudes in literature, the visual arts, music, and many other fields in the first half of the 19th century. The Romantics rejected the rationalism of the Enlightenment era for a much more emotional and sensual engagement with the world. This can be seen in the works of writers, painters, and musicians who embraced the awe-inspiring beauty of nature as well as themes and settings seen as mysterious, exotic, or primitive. Romantic artists took an interest in distant history, folk cultures, and national identities and in their works

stressed spontaneity, intuition, and the immediacy of emotion—in short, they valued the heart over the mind.

The influence of Romanticism can be seen in almost every facet of early 19th-century art and literature. Just a small sampling of examples might include the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Blake; the writings of Walter Scott, Mary Shelley, and E.T.A. Hoffmann; the music of Schubert, Schumann, and Liszt; and the paintings of Turner, Delacroix, and Caspar David Friedrich (whose iconic Romantic painting *The Wanderer over a Sea of Fog* is seen above).

A Primer on Scottish History

- Scotland's earliest recorded history begins with the Roman conquest of Britain. Roman rule in Scotland (named Caledonia in Latin) was incomplete and intermittent, in contrast to that in the more firmly managed province of Britannia. The land was inhabited by a variety of tribes, divided by those in the north, who spoke variants of Celtic languages, and the ones in the south, who spoke Brittonic languages.
- In response to Viking invasions, the historically antagonistic tribes of the north and south united in the ninth century and formed the first Kingdom of Scotland.
- In 1290, after the Scottish monarch died without an heir, England took advantage of the question of succession by invading Scotland. During the Wars of Scottish Independence, which were fought throughout the 13th and 14th centuries, Scotland saw a series of Scottish and English monarchs. At the wars' close, Scotland had prevailed and was established as an independent, sovereign land.
- In 1603, King James VI of Scotland inherited the English crown from his distant cousin Queen Elizabeth I. From that time, the two states shared a monarch.
- With the Acts of Union of 1707, the parliaments of Scotland and England voted to join the two kingdoms into a single entity. By the early 19th century, when *La Donna del Lago* was written, Scotland had been part of the Kingdom of Great Britain for two centuries.
- Because of its long history of civil strife and uprisings, as well as for its rough and craggy topography, Scotland was viewed by many foreigners as a wild and primitive land. The Highlands region in particular, with its archaic clan system, Gaelic language, and tartan dress, was the source of much of the popular perception of Scotland as a whole.

STEP 5: Returning to the text and music of *La Donna del Lago*, ask students to read the text on the reproducible handout in which the audience is introduced to Rodrigo. This excerpt tells us several important things about Rodrigo as a character. Invite students to offer up descriptions of him, based on what they have read. Examples could include the following:

- He is the leader of a passionate band of warriors.
- He is eager to fight and conquer his enemies.
- He is seeking Ellen, whom he loves.
- He imagines that success with Ellen would also promise success on the battlefield.

Next, play the corresponding music, beginning at **Track 2** with “*Eccomi a voi*” and ask students to follow along to the text, paying particular attention to the way that Rodrigo expresses his love and other desires. After listening to the excerpt, ask students how the music of this passage reinforces Rodrigo’s character as they were able to describe it from the text alone. Examples could include the following:

- When he is speaking to his troops, his music is rather stately, almost pompous.
- Rodrigo’s music while he is thinking about Ellen greatly differs from his preceding music, but it doesn’t last long. He doesn’t seem very preoccupied with love.
- When the warriors join in singing again, the music is war-like, even though they are singing about love.
- Rodrigo’s final passage begins almost lyrically but soon turns to music that sounds much more martial.

Encourage students to comment on whether they think the combination of military and romantic language is an effective mode of communication. Is Rodrigo drawing on common literary gestures or devices found in romantic speech? Is this an effective style for conveying love? Do they feel that there are similarities in the ways that Rodrigo and someone like Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice* express themselves?

When Rodrigo and Ellen meet at the end of Act I, we gain a closer glimpse of the relative success of their match. Refer students to the text provided on the reproducible handout and have them read along while listening to the music, beginning at **Track 3**. Invite students to think of this scene from the standpoint of Rodrigo. His bride is approaching and he responds by beginning to sing a love duet. With an audible change in style, the music tells us when he begins to have doubts. Douglas then jumps in and makes excuses for Ellen. His music is conciliatory, as he attempts to allay Rodrigo’s doubts.

Have students think back to the love duet between Ellen and Malcolm and the musical devices Rossini used to demonstrate their union. When Ellen begins singing in this musical number, what happens?

FUN FACT: Scott’s *Lady of the Lake* was a record-breaking success and inspired international interest in Scotland’s Loch Katrine and the surrounding Trossachs region. A hotel was built nearby for those who wished to visit “Ellen’s Isle,” initiating the first wave of tourism that led to the enduring popularity of the Trossachs as a vacation destination.



Stirling Castle, largely built by James V, is the setting for the final scenes of the opera.



- Ellen does not imitate Rodrigo or repeat his text. She initiates a completely different feeling in the music: it's in the minor mode, against an agitated accompaniment in the strings.
- Unlike in "*Vivere io non potrò*," there is a great musical gulf between Ellen and Rodrigo. She rejects his melody entirely; she refuses to participate in his love duet.

Introduce the idea that the music itself, and not merely the text, tells the audience how Ellen feels about Rodrigo.

STEP 6: Now that students have spent some time getting to know Rodrigo, Ellen, and Malcolm, as well as the types of romantic speech each of them employs, they are prepared to respond creatively with a brief improvisation using Rossini's characters. In this exercise, you will need to divide the class into groups of three. In each group, there will be one Ellen, one Rodrigo or Malcolm, and one referee.

Introduce the exercise to the class by reminding them of the conceit of *Sure Thing* by David Ives: each time one of the characters says something that the other doesn't like, a bell is rung. Have students choose roles within their group and explain that they will be participating in brief sketches in front of the class, similar to what Ives does in his play. Students who are playing the roles of Ellen or one of her lovers must improvise conversations that demonstrate their feelings toward one another and/or

their political beliefs. Each time one character makes a statement that the other would find distasteful, it is the referee's job to ring the bell. At this point, the conversation should start over seamlessly. Encourage students to make imaginative assumptions about the personalities and desires of their characters, based on what they know about them from the day's lesson and/or the synopsis of the opera.

After allowing a few minutes for preparation with their groups, call each ensemble up to the front of the room to perform their sketches. Have each group go through three to four brief conversations.

FOLLOW-UP: As a wrap-up at the end of class, discuss what made for the most entertaining and richest sketches. Which best displayed the central romantic conflict of the characters? Were there similar themes in all the sketches or were there differing opinions on what Ellen wanted to hear?

FUN FACT: The title heroine of Sir Walter Scott's poem shares her name with the famous Lady of the Lake of Arthurian legend who enchanted Merlin and gave King Arthur his sword Excalibur. But Scott's protagonist, Ellen, little resembles the figure of medieval literature. Though they both are associated with water and islands, Ellen lives on the very real shores of Loch Katrine, while the Arthurian Lady of the Lake rules the magical island realm of Avalon.



*History and Social Studies***IN PREPARATION**

Each student will need a photocopy of the reproducible resources for the activity found at the back of this guide, as well as the audio selections from *La Donna del Lago* available online or on the accompanying CD. It will also be helpful for students to have read the synopsis beforehand.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Social Studies, History, Politics, Humanities, and Arts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand *La Donna del Lago* in the context of early 19th-century intellectual history
- To analyze the use of foreign influences in artistic and political expression
- To consider an opera as a historical document, rooted in its age
- To think critically about a writer's unconscious biases

Scottish Fantasies

La Donna del Lago was the first Italian opera to be based on a work of the Scottish poet and novelist Sir Walter Scott. It is indicative of the fashion for Scottish culture in the 19th century. Imagery and stories from the “remote” edge of Europe contributed crucially both to the development of Romanticism and to a corollary interest in cultural nationalism. In this activity, students will consider some of the ways in which artists and writers have expressed nationality or appropriated foreign influences in their work. They will then participate in exercises that demonstrate how every utterance—whether artistic or political—is the product of its own age and culture. Students will:

- learn about the political status of Scotland in the 19th century
- compare different artistic portrayals of Scottish culture and some of the sources of their inspiration
- become familiar with a potent source of influence in 19th-century art, literature, and politics
- respond to their study of *La Donna del Lago* by “reading” another artwork for its historical context and potential biases



STEPS

The political and cultural forces influencing the creation of a work of art are often mysterious. In the case of *La Donna del Lago*, however, we are able to trace its inspiration with much greater accuracy, as it was the result of a tide of Scottish affectations then sweeping across Europe. In this activity, students will become acquainted with 19th-century artworks and consider the version of Scotland constructed by foreigners.

STEP 1: Begin the lesson by introducing key points of Scottish politics and history at the time that Rossini was composing *La Donna del Lago*, found in the sidebar *A Primer on Scottish History and Literature*. You may also want to refer to the sidebar *The Poetry of Ossian* for an introduction to the figure of Ossian, a supposedly ancient poet whose descriptions of bleak Scottish landscapes and wild Highlands desolation made him known as the “Homer of the North.”

STEP 2: Distribute the reproducible handout entitled *Scottish Fantasies* found at the back of this guide and have students read Sir Walter Scott’s poem “The Patriot.” You may have students read lines in alternation or assign groups of lines to different students. Then prompt them to provide details on the land Scott is describing, calling particular attention to the second verse of the poem. (Note: “Caledonia” was the ancient Roman name for modern-day Scotland. It is now used merely poetically.) Students may extract the following notes from the text:

- The land is “stern and wild.”
- It is an apt homeland for a “poetic child.”
- The speaker feels eternally bound to his native land; he calls wretched anyone who does not feel the same passionate attachment.
- The poem harkens back to a vanished, distant past when Scotland was richer and more lush.
- At the end of the poem the speaker mentions a “bard,” whose role seems to be to compose poetry in honor of the dead.

Ask students to provide possible explanations for the poem’s title. After summarizing their responses, introduce the notion of “cultural nationalism,” which emphasizes shared cultural traditions and uses the idea of nation as a positive force for identity—as opposed to other kinds of nationalism that see it as the basis for liberal democracy or as a claim to superiority. Drawing on their knowledge of U.S. and world history, ask students to comment on whether the poem describes an attitude that is universally true or one that could be seen as a product of the attitudes of its age. What are some examples of countries that saw a new interest in self-definition and advancement in the 19th century? Students may reference the Italian and German unification movements,

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND LA DONNA DEL LAGO

This activity directly supports the following Social Studies/Literacy Common Core Strands:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-12.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8

Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author’s claims.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-12.7

Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8

Evaluate an author’s premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

CCSS-ELA-Literacy.RH.9-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-12.9

Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work.

the status of disparate regions within the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, or Irish nationalism, among other examples.

STEP 3: Draw the discussion back to *La Donna del Lago* and remind students that the opera is an interpretation of Scottish culture as viewed by two Italians, Rossini and his librettist Andrea Tottola. Although based on Scott's poem, it may contain important differences in plot from its source (in addition to more trivial differences such as the spelling of names). On the reproducible handout, have students read the excerpts from *The Lady of the Lake*, Canto 2. At this point in the story, Roderick (Rossini's Rodrigo) has just reported to Douglas, Malcolm, Ellen, and his mother Margaret (who does not appear in the opera) that King James's forces are nearby, and he has proposed that they join together in battle against the crown. Have students summarize the action:

- Ellen and Margaret are dismayed; Douglas immediately proposes that they avoid conflict and that he and Ellen should depart Roderick's presence as they are attracting danger.
- Roderick is hungry for battle; he counters that Ellen should become his wife in order to unite the Highland clans. He sees his marriage as the path to victory in war.
- Douglas rejects Roderick's offer; he will not force Ellen to marry against her will. He also refuses to take up arms against the king.
- Roderick and Malcolm clash, and only the intervention of Douglas prevents them from fighting.

Next, have students read the excerpt from the end of Act I of *La Donna del Lago*, which corresponds to the same dramatic moment in the poem, while listening to the music (found on **Track 4** of the CD). Drawing on their understanding of the rest of the opera's plot, have students enumerate the ways in which the action differs from that of the poem. They may notice that:

- The narrative is much more condensed in the opera.
- In the opera, the male characters are all unified in their desire for battle; in the poem, Douglas counsels against war and Malcolm opposes Roderick.
- In the poem, Douglas refuses to give Ellen to Roderick because she does not love him; in the opera, he is insensitive to her wishes.
- The opera's characters include a group of bards who rouse the group to battle and valor; they are absent from the poem.
- In the opera, an "unusual light" (e.g. a comet) streaks across the sky; it is taken as an omen of victory.

Encourage students to draw conclusions about what these changes from the original poem imply about Rossini and Tottola's interpretation of Scotland. Namely, are Scott's characters adapted as full, complex figures, or do they appear as a much more uniform,

FUN FACT: In his poem, Scott makes imaginative use of a historical figure, King James V of Scotland, pictured below in a miniature portrait. Both Scott and Rossini draw on the popular myth that James used to travel around the Scottish countryside disguised as a commoner to get a closer look at his subjects.



stereotyped group? What is the pervasive attitude of the men? In the poem, Douglas is valued for his reason and counsel; how much of a role do these qualities play in the text of the opera? What is the role of the bards? Why do students think they are present in the opera? The Highlanders are influenced by the appearance of a comet; why might Rossini and Tottola have included such a thing?



An 18th-century engraving by Alexander Runciman of a subject from Ossian

Understood within the context of Romanticism, many of these changes take on heightened importance. The bards might be understood as an evocative emblem—shorthand for the wild, heroic land of Ossian, a country of primitive but powerful poetry and poet-prophets. The effect of the comet in the opera may also be interpreted as a Romantic addition by Rossini and Tottola. It demonstrates not only a fascination with the awesome and untamed power of nature but also an attachment to mystery and superstition.

Prompt students to consider the changes between the poem and the opera and their relation to Romanticism; feel free to reference the sidebar *Romanticism* for further reading.

STEP 4: Having examined some of the ways in which authors absorb the mores of their age and culture in the creation of artworks, it will be instructive to have students analyze a few documents from history in order to uncover the hidden (or outright) assumptions of their authors. Divide the class into several groups and assign each group one of the following brief texts (each found on the reproducible handout):

- Thomas Jefferson's second Inaugural Address (1805)
- *The Times of London* on the Irish potato famine (1846)
- Prince Ukhtomskii, a Russian writer and publisher, on the tsar's right to rule (1896)
- American economist Francis Walker on immigration (1896)

After allowing time for group discussion, ask representatives from each group to provide a brief summary of the viewpoint of their text's author. What is the language the author uses to describe the people under discussion? What are the assumptions he makes, either explicitly or implicitly? How might his viewpoint have been biased because of his own background? The goal of this exercise is to encourage students to consider the contexts of historical statements and to develop a practice of analyzing primary source materials with a sensitivity for the unspoken predispositions of the author.

FOLLOW-UP: As a class, discuss the portrayal of foreign cultures in the world of art. Have students brainstorm examples. Do they seem to belong to a larger group of works with similar attributes? Can they be placed within a cultural movement? What are some factors that affect how the foreign culture is portrayed (such as related current events)? For homework, students may select an example from the list below, study it, and write a paragraph explaining the context of the work and its portrayal of a different culture.

- Paul Gauguin's painting *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?*
- Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's symphonic poem *Schéhérazade*
- Rudyard Kipling's poem *The White Man's Burden*
- "Bon Bon" by Pitbull and "We Speak no Americano" by Yolanda Be Cool and DCUP
- "Mango Pickle Down River" by M.I.A.



Music

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide as well as the audio selections from *La Donna del Lago* available online or on the accompanying CD.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Music, English Language Arts, Humanities, and Arts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To introduce and/or reinforce knowledge of musical terminology
- To identify new musical vocabulary by looking at selections from *La Donna del Lago*
- To listen to musical examples critically and to apply new musical vocabulary during an interactive game

Bel Canto Bingo

Written around the midpoint of Rossini’s short, meteoric career (he spent most of the last four decades of his life in retirement), *La Donna del Lago* exemplifies the style of bel canto, which dominated Italian opera in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Bel canto emphasized the beauty of the vocal line above all else, and composers designed their scores to give singers every opportunity to show off the virtuosity of their instruments. In a bel canto aria, it was common practice for singers to improvise ornaments and embellishments (which, to a lesser degree, is still done today), making each performance both spontaneous and truly unique. Through the introduction of specific musical vocabulary, this activity will delve into the elements of bel canto singing, specifically focusing on the variety of vocal embellishments that bring a bel canto aria to life.

In the following activity, students will

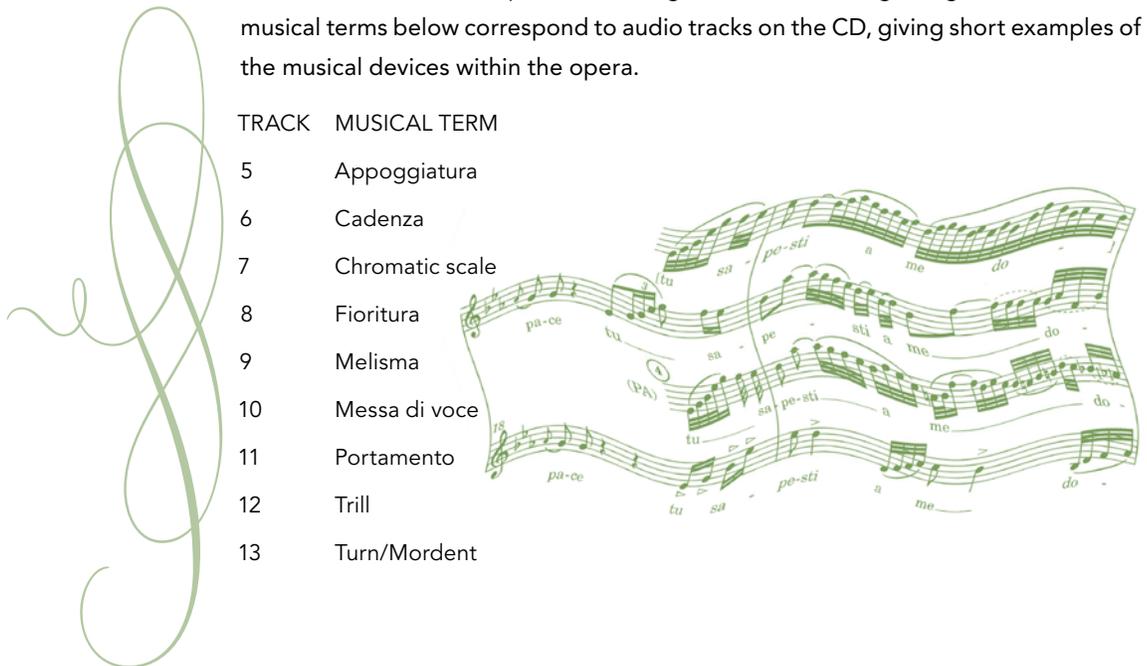
- explore the different musical aspects of the operatic bel canto style
- learn new musical terminology to describe what they hear
- recognize specific types of musical ornaments and improvised embellishments in several arias

STEPS

Students will listen to musical excerpts from three different arias in the opera. Their understanding of the terminology will then be tested in a listening recognition exercise, “Bel Canto Bingo.”

STEP 1: Distribute copies of the *Ten Essential Musical Terms* sidebar. Have your students look it over as a pre-lesson assignment or at the beginning of the class. The musical terms below correspond to audio tracks on the CD, giving short examples of the musical devices within the opera.

TRACK	MUSICAL TERM
5	Appoggiatura
6	Cadenza
7	Chromatic scale
8	Fioritura
9	Melisma
10	Messa di voce
11	Portamento
12	Trill
13	Turn/Mordent



STEP 2: Now give each student one to three copies of the *Bel Canto Bingo* handout at the back of this guide. Three rounds of bingo can be played based on excerpts from three different arias in the opera.

STEP 3: Before playing each track, call out the column or category that the audio excerpt belongs in, as well as the track number. For tracks in the Ornaments & Musical Devices columns, you will notice that in several cases there is more than one possible correct answer. You will also notice that there are a few terms that occur more than once on the bingo card. It is up to the discretion of the teacher to make a rule restricting how many different terms can be marked off with one example, and how many terms can be marked off after one audio track. For example, if one audio track has three possible correct answers (e.g., fioritura, melisma, cadenza), you might ask students to select only one term, but all instances of that term may be marked off. Once students have identified the musical term, they should circle it on their bingo cards and note the track number next to the term.

STEP 4: When a student calls “bingo” (five answers in a row, a column, or diagonally), have them read the squares they have marked off along with the track numbers they have notated and double-check that they correspond correctly with the tracks you have played.

A completed answer key with track numbers is provided for your convenience.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND LA DONNA DEL LAGO

This activity directly supports the following ELA-Literacy Common Core Strands:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.



Ten Essential Musical Terms

The following list of terms provides basic vocabulary to help your students engage more deeply with the music of *La Donna del Lago*.

Appoggiatura Derived from the Italian verb *appoggiare*, “to lean on,” or “to support,” the term refers to a vocal ornament in which a note is added one step above or below the main note, creating a dissonance with the prevailing harmony. The harmony is suspended until the appoggiatura resolves, creating a feeling of tension and release, or “leaning.” Appoggiaturas from above can also sound like vocal “sighing” and are often used in arias to enhance the feeling of crying or lamenting. In a score, an appoggiatura is notated as a very small note, attached by a curved line to the main note.



Bel canto An Italian term that literally translates to “beautiful singing.” It may refer to the era in the first half of the 19th century during which the works of Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini dominated the operatic stage. It can also indicate the style of singing common in these operas (and in earlier decades), which includes an emphasis on virtuosic vocal ornamentation, long legato lines, flexibility and agility in fast-moving passages, a lighter timbre, and sheer vocal beauty.

Cadenza A musical passage performed by one or more soloists as a virtuosic display of elaborate embellishment before the end of a phrase or section. In *bel canto*, cadenzas are often not written out by the composer but are instead improvised by the singer. During a cadenza, the orchestra remains silent in order to focus attention on the singer and give him or her the flexibility to improvise freely.

Chromatic Scale The chromatic scale divides an octave into twelve notes, each separated from its neighbor by the smallest common interval. In *bel canto* opera, the chromatic scale is sometimes used as a form of ornamentation, for instance in virtuosic, rapid-fire runs within cadenzas.

Fioritura Literally “flowering” in Italian, this term is used to describe long, florid musical passages involving complex and drawn-out musical ornaments. Passages of *fioritura* may have melismas, turns, appoggiaturas, trills, and a host of other ornaments contained within them.

Melisma A group of several notes sung to the same syllable of text. Melismatic singing is the opposite of syllabic singing, in which a single note is sung to each syllable of the text. In *bel canto*, melismas show off a singer’s breath control, vocal flexibility, and virtuosity. Melismas can vary in length and complexity, often combining step-wise movement from note to note with larger, more difficult leaps.

Messa di voce A vocal technique whereby a singer begins a long, drawn-out note from a quiet volume, increases to full volume, and returns to the original soft volume. *Messa di voce* takes a significant amount of breath control on the part of the singer to be executed flawlessly. The effect of *messa di voce* was so loved by 19th-century audiences that a famous pedagogue of the *bel canto* era called it “the soul of music.”

Portamento The technique of sliding or gliding between notes that are separated by a larger interval. *Portamento* (from the verb *portare*, “to carry”) was viewed as an important aspect of legato singing and is often added or improvised by the singer as an interpretative choice.

Trill An ornament in which the main note alternates very quickly with the note directly above it. Trills provide melodic and rhythmic interest and often occur toward the ends of phrases. While any instrument can perform trills, they are considered particularly virtuosic in the voice, where evenness and rapidity of execution is particularly difficult to achieve.



Turn / Mordent Turns and mordents are ornamental figures that embellish a single note. Mordents are formed from a single, fast, often incisively rhythmic alteration between the main note and the note above or below it. Turns are formed through the addition of ornamental notes both above and below the main note. Composers and singers may also string together a series of turns or mordents in longer passages of *fioritura*. Turns and mordents are some of the numerous improvised ornaments in *bel canto* singing.



Answer Key to **BEL CANTO BINGO**

ROUND 1: "TANTI AFFETTI"

TRACK:	COLUMN/CATEGORY:	ANSWER:
14	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Appoggiatura
15	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Fioritura
16	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Chorus Interlude
17	Libretto Excerpt	<i>"Deh! il silenzio"</i>
18	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Appoggiatura, Melisma, Fioritura
19	Libretto Excerpt	<i>"Ah Signor! la bella pace tu sapesti a me donar."</i>
20	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Cadenza, Turns
21	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Cadenza, Melisma
22	Libretto Excerpt	<i>"Tanta felicità!"</i>
23	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Appoggiatura
24	Libretto Excerpt	<i>"Ah! chi sperar potea"</i>
25	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Chorus Interlude
26	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Melisma
27	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Fioritura, Cadenza
28	Libretto Excerpt	<i>"Fra il padre, e fra l'amante"</i>
29	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Chromatic scale, cadenza

ROUND 2: "OH MATTUTINI ALBORI!"

TRACK:	COLUMN/CATEGORY:	ANSWER:
30	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Melisma
31	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Fioritura, Trill, Melisma
32	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Portamento
33	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Turns/Mordents
34	Libretto Excerpt	<i>"Tu vieni, o dolce immagine del caro mio tesor!"</i>
35	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Trill, Turn, Melisma, Fioritura
36	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Melisma
37	Libretto Excerpt	<i>"Oggetto del mio ardor!"</i>
38	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Cadenza, Melisma
39	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Turns/Mordents, Trills, Fioritura

Answer Key to BEL CANTO BINGO (continued)

ROUND 3: "ELENA! OH TU, CHE CHIAMO!"

TRACK:	COLUMN/CATEGORY:	ANSWER:
40	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Trill
41	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Turn, Melisma
42	Libretto Excerpt	<i>"s'Elena mia non è"</i>
43	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Melisma
44	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Trill, Melisma, Cadenza, Fioritura
45	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Turn, Melisma
46	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Cadenza
47	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Fioritura, Melisma
48	Libretti Excerpt	<i>"Di luce il cielo no più non brilla"</i>
49	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Cadenza
50	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Turn
51	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Melisma
52	Ornaments & Musical Devices	Messa di voce

OPERATIC GENRES

The term “opera” encompasses an enormous variety of works written between the late 16th century and the present day, in many different languages and with widely varying approaches to structure, plot, and performing forces. Over the centuries, composers have used many different names and labels to describe their operatic creations. The following list is by no means comprehensive, but it will give you an idea of the variety within the art form. These terms not only provide insight into a given opera’s language and type of story, but occasionally will also tell you such specifics as where it was likely to have been commissioned or performed.

drame lyrique A French opera of the late 19th or early 20th century influenced by the ideas of German composer Richard Wagner, often featuring psychologically complex characters or stories. Massenet’s *Werther* is an example.

dramma giocoso An 18th-century term for comic operas with tragic elements. Mozart used it to describe his *Don Giovanni*.

farsa A one-act opera on a comic subject, popular in Italy and specifically Venice in the late 18th and early 19th century.

favola in musica Literally “tale in music,” the term dates from the birth of opera at the beginning of the 17th century. The plots of these works were pastoral or mythological. The most famous example is Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo*.

grand opéra French opera of the 19th century, composed for the Opéra in Paris. Usually in five acts, grand opéra required enormous performing forces, including a large chorus and a ballet corps.

Märchenoper “Fairy-tale opera,” a genre of German opera incorporating folk tales and supernatural elements. Humperdinck’s *Hänsel und Gretel* is an example.

melodramma A more generic term for Italian opera of the 19th century with a serious subject.

Musikdrama Although Richard Wagner found the term unsatisfactory, it is commonly used to refer to his mature operas, which were revolutionary for the time in their dramatic and musical expression. The word reflects Wagner’s search for an apt description of what he called Gesamtkunstwerk, or “total work of art.”

opera buffa An Italian comic opera of the 18th century. Works of this type often explore human foibles and the flaws of contemporary society. Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro* is a paradigm of the genre.

opéra comique A French term first used in the 18th century but now most commonly associated with operas from the 19th century that featured individual musical numbers and spoken dialogue and were performed at the Opéra Comique in Paris. Regardless of their name, these works didn’t necessarily have to be comic. The original version of Bizet’s *Carmen* is an excellent example.

opera seria The opposite of opera buffa: an Italian opera of the 18th century on a tragic, heroic, or classical subject, usually featuring leading characters who were members of the nobility.

Operetta A light opera in German containing songs, dance, and spoken dialogue, popular in Vienna in the late 19th century. *Die Fledermaus* is the most famous example.

Singspiel A German opera of the 18th or 19th century featuring musical numbers interspersed with spoken dialogue. A singspiel would often incorporate magical elements or stories from popular folklore. The pinnacle of the genre can be seen in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*.

tragédie en musique A genre in 17th- and 18th-century France, also known as tragédie lyrique. It is characterized by serious subject matter, with plots generally drawn from mythology or Renaissance epics.



Supporting the Student Experience during *The Met: Live in HD* Transmission

IN PREPARATION

In this activity, students will need the Performance Activity reproducible handouts found in the back of this guide.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND *LA DONNA DEL LAGO*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1.c

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

Watching and listening to a performance is a unique experience which takes students beyond the printed page to an immersion in images, sound, technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities help students analyze different aspects of the experience and engage critically with the performance. They will consider the creative choices that have been made for the particular production they are watching and examine different aspects of the performance.

Each Performance Activity incorporates a reproducible sheet. Students should bring this activity sheet to the *Live in HD* transmission and fill it out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to details of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed.

The Scottish setting of *La Donna del Lago* is crucial to understanding the opera's meaning and placement in the context of 19th-century literary and artistic movements. The first activity sheet, entitled *Staging Scotland*, encourages students to reflect on the visual depiction of Scotland on the stage through scenic elements.

The second basic activity sheet is called *My Highs and Lows*. It is meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season. This sheet serves to guide students toward a consistent set of objective observations, as well as to help them articulate their own opinions. It is designed to enrich the students' understanding of the art form as a whole. The ratings system encourages students to express their critique: use these ratings to spark discussions that require careful, critical thinking.

The reproducible handouts for the performance activities can be found in the back of this guide. Either activity can provide the basis for class discussion following the transmission. On the next page, you'll find an additional activity created specifically for after-transmission follow-up.

Who's the Villain? A Closer Look at Rossini's Characters

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? The discussion offers an opportunity to apply the notes on students' *My Highs & Lows* sheet, as well as their thoughts about the visual design of the Met production—in short, to see themselves as *La Donna del Lago* experts.

Most operas leave little room for doubt in terms of which characters inspire sympathy or revulsion—which are the good guys and the bad guys. In some operas, an antagonist might even sing an entire aria expounding on his or her evil nature. In the case of *La Donna del Lago*, the question of the expected audience response is less simple. Ellen is clearly a sympathetic character, but what about James, Rodrigo, or even Ellen's father, Douglas? Those with mutual political affiliations aren't necessarily portrayed as entirely congenial. Conversely, political enemies aren't always dishonorable. Your students may want to discuss the following questions:

- Whose political cause is “right”? Are either the Highland rebels or the Scottish crown more justified than the other side?
- How would they describe the king's character? Is he good at heart? Or is he merely inspired to do the right thing by his love for Ellen?
- How do students feel about Rodrigo? Is he a worthy suitor? Does he seem honorable?
- What are some of the clues in the opera's staging that bolster their belief in the various characters' temperaments?
- Is it always the nature of political disagreements that each side mischaracterizes the other? Can students think of examples from their knowledge of history or current events where parties with opposite beliefs were able to engage in fair, even-handed discourse?

In *La Donna del Lago*, the political conflict at the heart of the story is intricately linked to the opera's romantic entanglements. You may enjoy hearing students imagine how the story might change if the Highland clans were not in revolt against the Scottish crown. How would this affect the purposes and goals of Ellen's marriage?

Ultimately, we can appreciate the fact that Rossini created characters so rich and varied that they can't be pigeonholed into simple categories. By examining what the design and staging of *La Donna del Lago* can reveal about the characters, students will gain an appreciation for the myriad artistic decisions involved in producing opera and the rich inroads to meaning available to audience members in their engagement with the art form.

IN PREPARATION

This activity requires no preparation other than attendance at the *Live in HD* transmission of *La Donna del Lago*.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To review students' understanding of Rossini's *La Donna del Lago*
- To explore operatic narratives and dramatic structure
- To examine the opera's themes and understand its historical context within the Romantic era
- To discuss students' overall experience in watching *La Donna del Lago*
- To think about how artistic choices are made

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND LA DONNA DEL LAGO

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1d

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

Excerpts taken from the complete recording on Decca Classics courtesy of Universal Music Classics

ELLEN

June Anderson

MALCOLM

Martine Dupuy

KING JAMES

Rockwell Blake

RODRIGO DI DHU

Chris Merritt

DOUGLAS

Giorgio Surjan

Conducted by

Riccardo Muti

Orchestra and Chorus
of Teatro alla Scala

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

The Language of Love

- 1 ACT I: Ellen and Malcolm.
- 2 ACT I: Rodrigo and the warriors.
- 3 ACT I: Rodrigo, Douglas, Ellen.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES

Scottish Fantasies

- 4 ACT I: Serano, Douglas, Rodrigo, Ellen, Malcolm, Women, and Bards.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: MUSIC

Bel Canto Bingo

- 5 Ex. Appoggiatura
- 6 Ex. Cadenza
- 7 Ex. Chromatic scale
- 8 Ex. Fioritura
- 9 Ex. Melisma
- 10 Ex. Messa di voce
- 11 Ex. Portamento
- 12 Ex. Trill
- 13 Ex. Mordent
- 14 "Tanti affetti" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Appoggiatura
- 15 "Tanti affetti" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Fioritura, Melisma
- 16 "Tanti affetti" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Chorus Interlude
- 17 "Tanti affetti" – Libretto Excerpt, "*Deh! il silenzio*"
- 18 "Tanti affetti" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Appoggiatura, Melisma, Fioritura
- 19 "Tanti affetti" – Libretto Excerpt, "*Ah Signor! la bella pace tu sapesti a me donar.*"
- 20 "Tanti affetti" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Cadenza, Turns, Melisma
- 21 "Tanti affetti" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Cadenza, Melisma
- 22 "Tanti affetti" – Libretto Excerpt, "*Tanta felicità!*"
- 23 "Tanti affetti" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Cadenza
- 24 "Tanti affetti" – Libretto Excerpt, "*Ah! chi sperar potea*"
- 25 "Tanti affetti" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Chorus Interlude

- 26 "Tanti affetti" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Melisma, Fioritura, Turns
- 27 "Tanti affetti" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Fioritura, Cadenza
- 28 "Tanti affetti" – Libretto Excerpt, *"Fra il padre, e fra l'amante"*
- 29 "Tanti affetti" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Chromatic scale, Cadenza, Mordents
- 30 "Oh mattutini albori!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Melisma, Turns
- 31 "Oh mattutini albori!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Fioritura, Trill, Melisma, Mordents
- 32 "Oh mattutini albori!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Portamento
- 33 "Oh mattutini albori!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Mordents
- 34 "Oh mattutini albori!" – Libretto Excerpt, *"Tu vieni, o dolce immagine del caro mio tesoro!"*
- 35 "Oh mattutini albori!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Trill, Turn, Melisma, Fioritura, Portamento
- 36 "Oh mattutini albori!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Melisma, Fioritura
- 37 "Oh mattutini albori!" – Libretto Excerpt, *"oggetto del mio ardore!"*
- 38 "Oh mattutini albori!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Cadenza, Melisma, Portamento, Mordents
- 39 "Oh mattutini albori!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Mordents, Trills, Fioritura, Portamento
- 40 "Elena! oh tu, che chiamo!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Trill
- 41 "Elena! oh tu, che chiamo!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Turn, Melisma
- 42 "Elena! oh tu, che chiamo!" – Libretto Excerpt, *"s'Elena mia non è"*
- 43 "Elena! oh tu, che chiamo!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Melisma, Turns
- 44 "Elena! oh tu, che chiamo!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Trill, Melisma, Cadenza, Fioritura, Portamento, Turns
- 45 "Elena! oh tu, che chiamo!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Turn, Melisma
- 46 "Elena! oh tu, che chiamo!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Cadenza
- 47 "Elena! oh tu, che chiamo!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Fioritura, Melisma, Mordents
- 48 "Elena! oh tu, che chiamo!" – Libretto Excerpt, *"di luce il cielo no più non brilla"*
- 49 "Elena! oh tu, che chiamo!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Cadenza, Turns
- 50 "Elena! oh tu, che chiamo!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Turn, Melisma
- 51 "Elena! oh tu, che chiamo!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Melisma
- 52 "Elena! oh tu, che chiamo!" – Ornaments & Musical Devices, Messa di voce

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
LA DONNA DEL LAGO

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

The Language of Love: Ellen and Malcolm's Love Duet

ELLEN: E nel fatal conflitto
di amore, e di dover, fra tante pene,
Elena! che farai?

MALCOLM: Mio caro bene!

ELLEN: Malcolm! Numi! Tu qui?

MALCOLM: Mi chiama in campo
quella ragione istessa
che arma I prodi di Scozia.

ELLEN: Ah! in quale istante giungesti!

MALCOLM: E che? dell'amor tuo poss'io, Elena, dubitar?

ELLEN: Crudel! E puoi oltraggiarmi così?

MALCOLM: Se fida è dunque a me quell'alma,
io sfiderò le stelle.
Sì, de' nostri tiranni
resisterò al poter.

ELLEN: Saprò morire esempio di costanza.

MALCOLM: A me la mano di giuramento in pegno.

ELLEN: Eccola.

ELLEN, MALCOLM: O sposi, o al tenebroso regno.

In this brutal struggle
between love and duty, in such pain,
what will you do, Ellen?

My dearest!

Malcolm! Oh my God! You're here?

I am called into battle
like all the brave men
who take up arms for Scotland.

Ah, of all times for you to enlist!

What of it? Could I ever doubt your love, Ellen?

Cruel man! How can you insult me like that?

If your heart is yet faithful to me,
I will defy the stars.
Yes, I will stand up to
the power of our tyrants.

I will die to show my devotion.

Then give me your hand as a sign of our promise.

Here it is.

Either we marry, or we join the realm of shadows.

TRACK 1

ELLEN: Vivere io no potrò,
mio ben, senza di te;
fra l'ombre scenderò
pria che mancar di fé.

MALCOLM: Vivere io non potrò *etc.*

ELLEN, MALCOLM: Vivere io non potrei *etc.*

I cannot live,
my dearest, without you;
I would rather descend to the shadows
than betray you.

I would not wish to live, etc.

I would not wish to live, etc.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

The Language of Love: Mr. Collins' Letter

Excerpt from *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen

First published in 1813, *Pride and Prejudice* is the story of Elizabeth Bennet, her four sisters, and their travails as they attempt to find suitable partners and comfortable futures.

“Believe me, my dear Miss Elizabeth, that your modesty, so far from doing you any disservice, rather adds to your other perfections. You would have been less amiable in my eyes had there not been this little unwillingness; but allow me to assure you that I have your respected mother’s permission for this address. You can hardly doubt the purport of my discourse, however your natural delicacy may lead you to dissemble; my attentions have been too marked to be mistaken. Almost as soon as I entered the house I singled you out as the companion of my future life. But before I am run away with by my feelings on this subject, perhaps it will be advisable for me to state my reasons for marrying—and moreover for coming into Hertfordshire with the design of selecting a wife, as I certainly did.”

The idea of Mr. Collins, with all his solemn composure, being run away with by his feelings, made Elizabeth so near laughing that she could not use the short pause he allowed in any attempt to stop him farther, and he continued:

“My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly—which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness. Twice has she condescended to give me her opinion (unasked too!) on this subject; and it was but the very Saturday night before I left Hunsford—between our pools at quadrille, while Mrs. Jenkinson was arranging Miss de Bourgh’s foot-stool, that she said, ‘Mr. Collins, you must marry. A clergyman like you must marry. Choose properly, choose a gentlewoman for my sake; and for your own, let her be an active, useful sort of person, not brought up high, but able to make a small income go a good way. This is my advice. Find such a woman as soon as you can, bring her to Hunsford, and I will visit her.’ Allow me, by the way, to observe, my fair cousin, that I do not reckon the notice and kindness of Lady Catherine de Bourgh as among the least of the advantages in my power to offer. You will find her manners beyond any thing I can describe; and your wit and vivacity I think must be acceptable to her, especially when tempered with the silence and respect which her rank will inevitably excite. Thus much for my general intention in favour of matrimony; it remains to be told why my views were directed to Longbourn instead of my own neighbourhood, where I assure you there are many amiable young women. But the fact is, that being, as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your honoured father (who, however, may live many years longer), I could not satisfy myself without resolving to choose a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible, when the melancholy event takes place—which, however, as I have already said, may not be for several years. This has been my motive, my fair cousin, and I flatter myself it will not sink me in your esteem. And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection. To fortune I am perfectly indifferent, and shall make no demand of that nature on your father, since I am well aware that it could not be complied with; and that one thousand pounds in the 4 per cents, which will not be yours till after your mother’s decease, is all that you may ever be entitled to. On that head, therefore, I shall be uniformly silent; and you may assure yourself that no ungenerous reproach shall ever pass my lips when we are married.”

It was absolutely necessary to interrupt him now.

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
LA DONNA DEL LAGO

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

The Language of Love: Dialogue from *Sure Thing*

Excerpt from *Sure Thing* by David Ives

David Ives (born 1950) is an American playwright whose quirky, comic works toy with theatrical conventions.

Characters: Bill and Betty, both in their late twenties. Setting: A café table, with a couple of chairs. Betty, reading at the table. An empty chair opposite her. Bill enters.

BILL: Excuse me. Is this chair taken?
BETTY: Excuse me?
BILL: Is this taken?
BETTY: Yes it is.
BILL: Oh, sorry.
BETTY: Sure thing.
(A bell rings softly.)
BILL: Excuse me. Is this chair taken?
BETTY: Excuse me?
BILL: Is this taken?
BETTY: No, but I'm expecting somebody in a minute.
BILL: Oh. Thanks anyway.
BETTY: Sure thing.
(A bell rings softly.)
BILL: Excuse me. Is this chair taken?
BETTY: No, but I'm expecting somebody very shortly.
BILL: Would you mind if I sit here till he or she or it comes?
BETTY: *(glances at her watch)* They seem to be pretty late...
BILL: You never know who you might be turning down.
BETTY: Sorry. Nice try, though.
BILL: Sure thing.
(Bell.)
BILL: Is this seat taken?
BETTY: No, it's not.
BILL: Would you mind if I sit here?
BETTY: No. Go ahead.
BILL: Thanks. *(He sits. She continues reading.)*
Everyplace else seems to be taken.
BETTY: Mm-hm.
BILL: Great place.
BETTY: Mm-hm.
BILL: What's the book?
BETTY: I just wanted to read in quiet, if you don't mind.
BILL: No, sure thing.
(Bell.)
BILL: Everyplace else seems to be taken.
BETTY: Mm-hm.
BILL: Great place for reading
BETTY: Yes, I like it.
BILL: What's the book?
BETTY: *The Sound and the Fury.*
BILL: Oh. Hemingway.
(Bell.)
BILL: What's the book?
BETTY: *The Sound and the Fury.*
BILL: Oh. Faulkner.
BETTY: Have you read it?
BILL: Not... actually. I've sure read about... it, though. It's supposed to be great.
BETTY: It is great.
BILL: I hear it's great.
(Small pause.) Waiter?
(Bell.)
BILL: What's the book?
BETTY: *The Sound and the Fury.*
BILL: Oh. Faulkner.
BETTY: Have you read it?
BILL: I'm a Mets fan, myself.
(Bell.)
BETTY: Have you read it?
BILL: Yeah, I read it in college.
BETTY: Where was college?
BILL: I went to Oral Roberts University.
(Bell.)
BETTY: Where was college?
BILL: I was lying. I never really went to college. I just like to party.
(Bell.)
BETTY: Where was college?
BILL: Harvard.
BETTY: Do you like Faulkner?
BILL: I love Faulkner. I spent a whole winter reading him once.
BETTY: I've just started.
BILL: I was so excited after ten pages that I went out and bought everything else he wrote. One of the greatest reading experiences of my life. I mean, all that incredible psychological understanding. Page after page of gorgeous prose. His profound grasp of the mystery of time and human existence. The smells of the earth... What do you think?
BETTY: I think it's pretty boring.
(Bell.)

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

The Language of Love: Introduction to Rodrigo

WARRIORS: Qual rapido torrente,
che vince ogni confin,
se torbido, e fremente
piomba dal giogo alpin,
così, se arditi in campo
ne adduce il tuo valor,
non troverà più scampo
l'ingiusto, l'oppressor.
Vieni, combatti, e vinci,
corri a novelli allori:
premio di dolci ardori
già ti prepara Amor.

Just like those rushing rapids
that overflow their banks
turbulently tumble and tremble
down Alpine cliffs,
so will you valiantly lead us
through the heat of battle,
and the unjust oppressor
will not escape.
Come, fight and conquer,
and chase new laurels of triumph;
Love is already preparing
your sweet reward.

TRACK 2

RODRIGO: Eccomi a voi, miei prodi,
onor del patrio suolo;
se meco siete, io volo
già l'oste a debellar.
Allor che i petti invade
sacro di patria amore,
sa ognor di mille spade
un braccio trionfar.

I am here with you, my brave men,
the pride and joy of this native land;
if you are with me, I shall indeed
defeat the enemy host.
As long as your hearts overflow
with the sacred love of our homeland,
a single arm can triumph
over a thousand spears.

WARRIORS: Sì, patrio onor c'invada,
deh! Guidaci a trionfar!

Yes, we are filled with our country's honor;
lead us on to triumph!

RODRIGO: Eccomi a voi *etc.*

I am here with you, etc.

WARRIORS: Ci guida a trionfar!

Lead us on to triumph!

RODRIGO: Ma dov'è colei che accende
dolce fiamma nel mio seno?
De' suoi lumi un sol baleno
Fa quest'anima bear!

But where is she who lights
the sweet flame in my heart?
A single flash of her eyes
delights my soul!

WARRIORS: Premio di dolci ardori
già ti prepara Amor.

Love is already preparing
your sweet reward.

RODRIGO: Se a'miei voti Amor sorride,
altro il cor bramar non sa!
Ed allor, qual nuovo Alcide,
Saprò in campo fulminar.

My heart wants nothing more
than for Love to smile on my hopes!
And so, like a new Hercules,
I will strike down everyone on the battlefield.

WARRIORS: A'tuoi voti Amore arride
vieni in campo a fulminar!

Love smiles on your hopes;
Come strike down everyone on the battlefield!

RODRIGO: Saprò in campo fulminar.
Se a'miei voti Amore arride *etc.*
saprò in campo fulminar.

I will strike down everyone on the battlefield.
If Love smiles on my hopes...
I will strike down everyone on the battlefield.

WARRIORS: Vieni in campo a fulminar!

Come strike down everyone on the battlefield!

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

The Language of Love: Rodrigo and Ellen Meet

TRACK 3

RODRIGO: Quanto a quest'alma amante
fia dolce un tale istante,
non può il mio labbro esprimere,
né trova accenti Amor.
Ma che? tu taci, e pavida
il ciglio abbassi ancor?

DOUGLAS: Loquace è il suo silenzio:
il sai: Loclinia vergine
gli affetti suoi più teneri
consacra al suo pudor.

ELLEN: (Come celar le smanie
che straziano il mio cor?
Non posso, oh Dio! Resistere
A così rio dolor!)

DOUGLAS: (Se al tuo dover dimentica
ti rende altro amator,
figlia sleal, sì, sì, paventami,
ah trema del mio furor!)

RODRIGO: (A che i repressi gemiti?
A che quel suo pallor?
Ondeggio incerto, e palpito
fra speme, e fra timor!)

My lips cannot express
how sweet such a moment
is to my loving heart,
nor can Love find words.
But what is this? You are silent,
and timidly cast your eyes downward?

Her silence speaks volumes;
in this country, you now, a virgin
conceals her tender feelings
out of modesty.

(How can I hide the desires
that torment my heart?
I cannot—oh God—
endure such pain!

(Has another lover
made you forget your duty?
Faithless daughter! Fear me!
Tremble at my fury!)

(Why does she hold back her tears?
And why is she so pale?
I waver and tremble
between hope and fear!)

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Scottish Fantasies: Sir Walter Scott

Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) was a Scottish novelist and poet. His works, with picturesque descriptions of his native land, became an international phenomenon.

The Patriot

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned,
From wandering on a foreign strand!
If such there breathe, go, mark him well;
For him no Minstrel raptures swell;
High though his tides, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;
Despite those tides, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentred all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.

O Caledonia! stern and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child!
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood,
Land of my sires! what mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band,
That knits me to thy rugged strand!
Still, as I view each well known scene,
Think what is now, and what hath been,
Seems as, to me, of all bereft,
Sole friends thy woods and streams were left;
And thus I love them better still,
Even in extremity of ill.
By Yarrow's stream still let me stray,
Though none should guide my feeble way;
Still feel the breeze down Ettricke break,
Although it chill my withered cheek;
Still lay my head by Teviot Stone,
Though there, forgotten and alone,
The Bard may draw his parting groan.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Scottish Fantasies: Sir Walter Scott (CONTINUED)

Walter Scott, *The Lady of the Lake*, Canto 2

XXX

Ellen and Margaret fearfully
Sought comfort in each other's eye,
Then turned their ghastly look, each one,
This to her sire, that to her son.
The hasty color went and came
In the bold cheek of Malcolm Graeme,
But from his glance it well appeared
'T was but for Ellen that he feared;
While, sorrowful, but undismayed,
The Douglas thus his counsel said:
'Brave Roderick, though the tempest roar,
It may but thunder and pass o'er;
Nor will I here remain an hour,
To draw the lightning on thy bower;
For well thou know'st, at this gray head
The royal bolt were fiercest sped.
For thee, who, at thy King's command,
Canst aid him with a gallant band,
Submission, homage, humbled pride,
Shall turn the Monarch's wrath aside.
Poor remnants of the Bleeding Heart,
Ellen and I will seek apart
The refuge of some forest cell,
There, like the hunted quarry, dwell,
Till on the mountain and the moor
The stern pursuit be passed and o'er,'—

XXX

'No, by mine honor,' Roderick said,
'So help me Heaven, and my good blade!
No, never! Blasted be yon Pine,
My father's ancient crest and mine,
If from its shade in danger part
The lineage of the Bleeding Heart!
Hear my blunt speech: grant me this maid
To wife, thy counsel to mine aid;
To Douglas, leagued with Roderick Dhu,
Will friends and allies flock enow;
Like cause of doubt, distrust, and grief,
Will bind to us each Western Chief
When the loud pipes my bridal tell,
The Links of Forth shall hear the knell,
The guards shall start in Stirling's porch;
And when I light the nuptial torch,
A thousand villages in flames
Shall scare the slumbers of King James!—
Nay, Ellen, blench not thus away,
And, mother, cease these signs, I pray;
I meant not all my heat might say.—
Small need of inroad or of fight,
When the sage Douglas may unite
Each mountain clan in friendly band,
To guard the passes of their land,
Till the foiled King from pathless glen
Shall bootless turn him home again.'

...



THE MET: LIVE IN HD
LA DONNA DEL LAGO

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Scottish Fantasies: Sir Walter Scott (CONTINUED)

XXXII

Such purpose dread could Malcolm spy
In Ellen's quivering lip and eye,
And eager rose to speak,—but ere
His tongue could hurry forth his fear,
Had Douglas marked the hectic strife,
Where death seemed combating with life;
For to her cheek, in feverish flood,
One instant rushed the throbbing blood,
Then ebbing back, with sudden sway,
Left its domain as wan as clay.
'Roderick, enough! enough!' he cried,
'My daughter cannot be thy bride;
Not that the blush to wooer dear,
Nor paleness that of maiden fear.
It may not be,—forgive her,
Chief, Nor hazard aught for our relief.
Against his sovereign, Douglas ne'er
Will level a rebellious spear.
'T was I that taught his youthful hand
To rein a steed and wield a brand;
I see him yet, the princely boy!
Not Ellen more my pride and joy;
I love him still, despite my wrongs
By hasty wrath and slanderous tongues.
O seek the grace you well may find,
Without a cause to mine combined!

...

XXXIV

Then Roderick from the Douglas broke—
As flashes flame through sable smoke,
Kindling its wreaths, long, dark, and low,
To one broad blaze of ruddy glow,
So the deep anguish of despair
Burst, in fierce jealousy, to air.
With stalwart grasp his hand he laid
On Malcolm's breast and belted plaid:
'Back, beardless boy!' he sternly said,
'Back, minion! holdst thou thus at naught
The lesson I so lately taught?
This roof, the Douglas, and that maid,
Thank thou for punishment delayed.'
Eager as greyhound on his game,
Fiercely with Roderick grappled Graeme.
'Perish my name, if aught afford
Its Chieftain safety save his sword!
Thus as they strove their desperate hand
Griped to the dagger or the brand,
And death had been—but Douglas rose,
And thrust between the struggling foes
His giant strength:—'Chieftains, forego!
I hold the first who strikes my foe.—
Madmen, forbear your frantic jar!
What! is the Douglas fallen so far,
His daughter's hand is deemed the spoil
Of such dishonorable broil?'
Sullen and slowly they unclasp,
As struck with shame, their desperate grasp,
And each upon his rival glared,
With foot advanced and blade half bared.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Scottish Fantasies: The Clans Mobilize

TRACK 4

SERANO: Sul colle a Morve opposto
ostil drappello avanza.

WOMEN, WARRIORS: Nemici!

DOUGLAS: Oh qual baldanza!

RODRIGO: Andiam! Disperdansi! Distruggansi gli audaci.

ELLEN: (Oh quai sanguigne faci
veggo al mio sguardo ognor!)

MALCOLM, RODRIGO, DOUGLAS: (Privato affanno, ah taci!
trionfa, o patrio amor!)

RODRIGO: A voi, sacri cantori!
le voci ormai sciogliete:
in sen bellici ardori
destare su... movete;
ed al tremendo segno,
che a battaglia ne invita,
mi giuri ogn'alma ardita
di vincere o morir.

MALCOLM, DOUGLAS, WARRIORS: Giura quest'alma ardita
di vincere o morir.

BARDS: Già un raggio forier
d'immenso splendor
addita il sentier
di gloria e d'onor!

ANOTHER GROUP OF BARDS: O figli d'Eroi!
Rodrigo è con voi.
Correte, struggete
quell pugno di schiavi.
Già l'ombra degli avi
vi pugnano allato.
Voi, fieri all'esempio
di tanto valor,
su, su! Fate scempio
del vostro oppressor!

On the hill opposite Morve
the enemy banners advance.

The enemy!

What boldness!

Let's go! Advance! Crush the brazen foe!

(Oh what bloody tortures
I always see before my eyes!)

(All my fears, be still!
Let love of country prevail!)

Ye sacred singers!
Let your voices raise in songs
that will ignite the courage
in our warriors' hearts. Rise up!
Advance! And at the fearsome signal
that calls us to battle,
let every man swear:
victory or death.

Let every man swear:
victory or death.

Already a prophetic light
of immense splendor
shows the way
to glory and honor!

O sons of heroes!
Rodrigo is with you.
Hurry, annihilate
that band of slaves.
Already the spirits of your ancestors
fight beside you.
Take pride in their example
of great valor.
Rise up! Rise up! Slaughter
your oppressor!

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Scottish Fantasies (CONTINUED)

WOMEN: E allora felici
col core sereno...

ALBINA, WOMEN: ...le spose, gli amici
stringendovi al seno,
l'ulivo all'alloro
succeder saprà.

BARDS: O figli d'Eroi!
Rodrigo è con voi.
Correte, struggete
il vostro oppressor.

RODRIGO: All'armi, compagni!
la Gloria ne attende.

**ELLEN, ALBINA, MALCOLM, RODRIGO, SERANO,
DOUGLAS, WOMEN, WARRIORS:** Di luce si accende insolita il Ciel!

RODRIGO, DOUGLAS: D'illustre vittoria
Annunzio fedel!

MALCOLM, RODRIGO, DOUGLAS, SERANO: Su... amici! guerrieri,
Su... marciamo, struggiamo!

WARRIORS: Su... amici! guerrieri!
Marciamo! struggiamo
il nostro oppressor!

BARDS: Correte! Struggete
il vostro oppressor!

ELLEN, ALBINA, WOMEN: Su i nostril guerrieri,
compagnie! Imploriamo del cielo il favor!

And then happy
with serene hearts...

...your wives and friends
will warmly embrace you,
and the olive branch will be
turned into a laurel wreath.

O sons of heroes!
Rodrigo is with you.
Hurry! Annihilate
your oppressor.

To arms, men!
Glory awaits you.

A strange light
streaks across the sky!

A trustworthy omen
of illustrious victory!

Up... friends, warriors!
Let us march, let us annihilate!

Rise up! Friends! Warriors!
Let us march forward! Let us annihilate
our oppressor!

Hurry! Slaughter
your oppressor!

We implore heaven's blessing
upon this company of warriors.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Scottish Fantasies: Uncovering Assumptions

Excerpt from Thomas Jefferson's Second Inaugural Address (1805)

The aboriginal inhabitants of these countries I have regarded with the commiseration their history inspires. Endowed with the faculties and the rights of men, breathing an ardent love of liberty and independence, and occupying a country which left them no desire but to be undisturbed, the stream of overflowing population from other regions directed itself on these shores; without power to divert, or habits to contend against, they have been overwhelmed by the current, or driven before it; now reduced within limits too narrow for the hunter's state, humanity enjoins us to teach them agriculture and the domestic arts; to encourage them to that industry which alone can enable them to maintain their place in existence, and to prepare them in time for that state of society, which to bodily comforts adds the improvement of the mind and morals. We have therefore liberally furnished them with the implements of husbandry and household use; we have placed among them instructors in the arts of first necessity; and they are covered with the aegis of the law against aggressors from among ourselves.

But the endeavors to enlighten them on the fate which awaits their present course of life, to induce them to exercise their reason, follow its dictates, and change their pursuits with the change of circumstances, have powerful obstacles to encounter; they are combated by the habits of their bodies, prejudice of their minds, ignorance, pride, and the influence of interested and crafty individuals among them, who feel themselves something in the present order of things, and fear to become nothing in any other. These persons inculcate a sanctimonious reverence for the customs of their ancestors; that whatsoever they did, must be done through all time; that reason is a false guide, and to advance under its counsel, in their physical, moral, or political condition, is perilous innovation; that their duty is to remain as their Creator made them, ignorance being safety, and knowledge full of danger; in short, my friends, among them is seen the action and counteraction of good sense and bigotry; they, too, have their anti-philosophers, who find an interest in keeping things in their present state, who dread reformation, and exert all their faculties to maintain the ascendancy of habit over the duty of improving our reason, and obeying its mandates.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Scottish Fantasies: Uncovering Assumptions (CONTINUED)

Editorial in *The Times of London*, February 10, 1846, regarding the Irish potato famine

We have been united to Ireland for 47 years by the ties of legislative association. During that time Ireland has enjoyed all the privileges that England enjoyed. ...During these 47 years she has contributed to the public revenue not more than one-sixth of the whole—from several of the more oppressive taxes she has been entirely absolved—she has devolved on England a debt contracted before the union, the interest of which equals or nearly equals all that she now remits to the Imperial Treasury; she costs annually half of what she yields in the way of taxation—yet notwithstanding these facts she claims in alternate tones of supplication and menace that her poor shall be supported by our bounty, her improvidence corrected by our prudence, and her self-sought necessities alleviated by our mortgaged wealth. Her representatives tells us at one moment, as Mr. O’Connell told us on Monday—that we ought to behave with the charity of a Christian country, irrespectively of national distinctions and prudential reflections, proportioning our bounty and the enormity of an unusual infliction and the numbers of complaining multitudes. At another moment they tell us, as Sir W. Barron and Captain Osbourne told us, in Parliamentary language, and as the Irish members of the “Reform” Smoking room yell out in language neither Parliamentary nor civil, that do what we can, we are only doing what we ought; that Ireland expects as a right that we should from the last scruple of “mechanic wages” pay down the cost of Irish imprudence and mitigate the acerbity of Irish wretchedness. In a word, between the evictions of a plausible mendicancy and an extortionate vehemence, nothing is left but to tax English labour for uncounted years to come, and to pay Ireland three times over the value of its fee simple, to gratify the prayers of her gentler, and the demands of her noisier, delegates. Is it worthwhile doing this?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Scottish Fantasies: Uncovering Assumptions (CONTINUED)

Prince Ukhtomskii on Russia's Imperial Destiny

(Excerpted from *Travels in the East of Nicholas II*. London: 1896)

All that used to be matter of report, a dream of a fabulous land on the very borders of the world, is now accessible by a journey of a few weeks. The twentieth century promises us even greater surprises in this respect. We must not blind our thoughts and our imagination by prejudices and fancied terrors to the undoubtedly coming events which will change all things. If on the threshold of a future of growing complexity we really thirst for moral healing, for great knowledge and unheard-of deeds in the cause of Russia and the Czar, we must first call to mind whence and how our native land came into being, whose blood it is that flows most abundantly in our veins, what are the brilliant traditions of our past. A predominant part in it has always fallen to the share of Asia. It was Asia that devastated us, and it was she, on the other hand, that renovated us. It is owing to her alone that the Russian mind has developed the idea of a Christian autocrat placed by Providence above all earthly vanity, amid a throng of heterodox but sympathizing races. An old Russian poem gives a characteristic view of the position of our sovereigns on the throne of Moscow—

*“Our White Czar is a king above kings,
And he holdeth fast to the Christian faith,
To the Christian faith, to the faith of prayer:
He standeth forth for the faith of Christ,
And for the house of the Holy Virgin.
All the hordes have bowed down to him,
All the tribes have submitted to him,
Because the White Czar is king over kings.”*

The popular songs of Russia present us with a similar view of the secular prince of Moscow. In the letter of Ivan the Terrible to Prince Koorbsky there is a still clearer realization of the divine origin of all true autocratic thought and constant care for the good of the people: “The earth is ruled by the mercy of God and the grace of the Immaculate Virgin; by the prayers of the saints and the blessing of our fathers, and last of all, by us, its sovereigns.” Where and when, in what European sovereigns, can we find more or as much humility in the estimate of their position? Such words could be used only by a sovereign deeply imbued with the Oriental view that the world is plunged in sin and falsehood; that he himself, a weak mortal, was strong and “wide ruling” only by the unseen favor of a bright and spiritual power, creating and maintaining all around him.

It is this sacred conviction which has given birth to the steadfast belief both of our rulers and of the ruled, that Russia is the source and center of an invincible might...

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Scottish Fantasies: Uncovering Assumptions (CONTINUED)

Francis Walker, “The Restriction of Immigration” in *The Atlantic Monthly* (June, 1896)

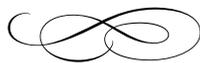
When we speak of the restriction of immigration, at the present time, we have not in mind measures undertaken for the purpose of straining out from the vast throngs of foreigners arriving at our ports a few hundreds, or possibly thousands of persons, deaf, dumb, blind, idiotic, insane, pauper, or criminal, who might otherwise become a hopeless burden upon the country, perhaps even an active source of mischief. The propriety, and even the necessity of adopting such measures is now conceded by men of all shades of opinion concerning the larger subject. There is even noticeable a rather severe public feeling regarding the admission of persons of any of the classes named above; perhaps one might say, a certain resentment at the attempt of such persons to impose themselves upon us. We already have laws which cover a considerable part of this ground; and so far as further legislation is needed, it will only be necessary for the proper executive department of the government to call the attention of Congress to the subject. There is a serious effort on the part of our immigration officers to enforce the regulations prescribed, though when it is said that more than five thousand persons have passed through the gates at Ellis Island, in New York harbor, during the course of a single day, it will be seen that no very careful scrutiny is practicable.

It is true that in the past there has been gross and scandalous neglect of this matter on the part both of government and people, here in the United States. For nearly two generations, great numbers of persons utterly unable to earn their living, by reason of one or another form of physical or mental disability, and others who were, from widely different causes, unfit to be members of any decent community, were admitted to our ports without challenge or question. It is a matter of official record that in many cases these persons had been directly shipped to us by states or municipalities desiring to rid themselves of a burden and a nuisance; while it could reasonably be believed that the proportion of such instances was far greater than could be officially ascertained. But all this is of the past. The question of the restriction of immigration today does not deal with that phase of the subject. What is proposed is, not to keep out some hundreds, or possibly thousands of persons, against whom lie specific objections like those above indicated, but to exclude perhaps hundreds of thousands, the great majority of whom would be subject to no individual objections; who, on the contrary, might fairly be expected to earn their living here in this new country, at least up to the standard known to them at home, and probably much more. The question today is, not of preventing the wards of our almshouses, our insane asylums, and our jails from being stuffed to repletion by new arrivals from Europe; but of protecting the American rate of wages, the American standard of living, and the quality of American citizenship from degradation through the tumultuous access of vast throngs of ignorant and brutalized peasantry from the countries of eastern and southern Europe...

LA DONNA DEL LAGO

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Bel Canto Bingo Card

ORNAMENTS & MUSICAL DEVICES	LIBRETTO EXCERPTS	ORNAMENTS & MUSICAL DEVICES	LIBRETTO EXCERPTS	ORNAMENTS & MUSICAL DEVICES
Fioritura 	<i>“Deh! il silenzio”</i>	Cadenza 	<i>“Ah! chi sperar potea”</i>	Appoggiatura 
Messa di voce 	<i>“Di luce il cielo no più non brilla”</i>	Trill 	<i>“s'Elena mia non è”</i>	Fioritura 
Appoggiatura 	<i>“Tanti affetti in tal momento”</i>	Melisma 	<i>“Fra il padre, e fra l'amante”</i>	Cadenza 
Trill 	<i>“Tu vieni, o dolce imagine, del caro mio tesor!”</i>	Portamento 	<i>“Oggetto del mio ardor!”</i>	Turn/Mordent 
Melisma 	<i>“Tanta felicità!”</i>	Chorus Interlude 	<i>“Ah Signor! la bella pace tu sapesti a me donar.”</i>	Chromatic scale 

At the Met: *Staging Scotland*

The sets and costumes of *La Donna del Lago* contain many visual markers that make it clear that the opera is set in Scotland. During *The Met: Live in HD* transmission, pay close attention to the sets and costumes, and make notes on the scenic elements that communicate aspects of Scottish landscape and culture.

SETTING

SCENIC ELEMENTS

LOCH KATRINE, AT DAWN

IN THE HOUSE OF DOUGLAS

A VAST PLAIN ENCLOSED BY MOUNTAINS

DENSE WOODS WITH A GROTTO

A ROOM IN THE ROYAL PALACE AT STIRLING

AT THE THRONE

COSTUMES

DESCRIPTION

RODRIGO

JAMES AS THE KING

DOUGLAS

ELLEN

La Donna del Lago: My Highs & Lows

MARCH 14, 2015

CONDUCTED BY MICHELE MARIOTTI

REVIEWED BY _____

THE STARS	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
JOYCE DIDONATO AS ELLEN	*****	
JUAN DIEGO FLÓREZ AS KING JAMES/UBERTO	*****	
DANIELA BARCELLONA AS MALCOLM	*****	
OREN GRADUS AS DOUGLAS	*****	
JOHN OSBORN AS RODRIGO	*****	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
ON THE SHORE OF LOCH KATRINE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ELLEN AND KING JAMES/UBERTO MEET MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
KING JAMES LEARNS MORE AT THE HOUSE OF DOUGLAS MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MALCOLM AND ELLEN REUNITE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
RODRIGO AND HIS WARRIORS ARRIVE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE CLANS MUSTER AND MARCH TO BATTLE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
KING JAMES AND ELLEN MEET AGAIN MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
KING JAMES AND RODRIGO FIGHT MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MALCOLM SEARCHES FOR ELLEN MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ELLEN FINDS KING JAMES AT THE PALACE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE BIG REVELATION MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5